Bethlehem Board of Selectmen

Meeting Minutes

December 4th, 2023

In person –Chairman Morris, Selectman Strand, Selectman Hibberd, and Selectman Bruno.

Public Input- Rich Southwell asked the board to investigate the elderly exemption to make sure it was appropriate for the current economy. Barry Zitzer updated the board that the Transfer Station Committee would be resending the USDA grant.

Chairman Morris thanked everyone for Christmas in Bethlehem and noted what a fantastic event it was.

Budget: Visitors Center, Direct Assistance, Planning Zoning, Building Inspection, Conservation Commission, Executive, Insurance, Assessing, Wood Assessor

Direct Assistance- Dawn Ferringo, Welfare Director, updated the board that she reviewed the 2023 expenditures and moved or reduced line items where appropriate. Ms. Ferringo continued the pantry was awarded a $15,000 grant to make upgrades in addition to a $1,500 farm subsidy grant. Selectman Bruno asked Ms. Ferringo if food from USDA was used in the little free pantry, and Ms. Ferringo replied it is rotated to the Little Free Pantry 3 days a week. Ms. Ferringo also informed the board that the Food Pantry will be receiving $1,400 from the Littleton Food Coop for partner of the month.

Planning Zoning- Anthony Rodrigues, Chairman of the Planning Board, updated the board that the increase to the Planning Board budget pertained to the Master Plan initial work and personnel. Selectman Bruno noted the increase in registration isn’t really an increase to the budget because the expense is charged to the applicant. Mr. Rodrigues thanked Dawn Ferringo for her assistance with the board.

Building Inspection- Bob Francis, Building Inspector and Code Officer, updated the board that Bethlehem had 13 solar permits, 17 new buildings, 61 building permits, and 2 commercial building permits. Mr. Francis continued his budget increase of $1,380 was all personnel and he would like to add to training materials.

Visitors center- The visitors center 2024 budget was flat to 2023. The board discussed needing additional information regarding the marketing line item and services.

Conservation Commission- Chairman Morris updated the board that Conservation Commission’s 2024 budget is remaining the same as 2023. She continued that the budget supports school and rec programs and community clean up day.

Wood Assessing- The Wood Assessing budget remains the same as 2023.

Insurance- The board discussed the insurance 12% increase noting that we switched to Health Trust two years ago from New Hampshire Interlocal Trust and we are not yet eligible to switch back so there is not much the town can do to reduce the cost.

Assessing – The board discussed the assessing increase which is related to using the assessing capital reserve down for the reevaluation. KRT ‘s contract is $39,225 and Sansoucy is $32,900. Mr. Southwell noted how often he references the GIS map on the Bethlehem website.

Executive- The board discussed the executive 2024 budget noting the increase is mostly due to personnel. The executive budget also added for 2024 $1,800 to lease a printer if the current one does not make it the entire year. The board also discussed the possibility of moving marketing from visitors center to executive.

FEMA Flood Map Resolution- The board decided to move the resolution to a further meeting to better compare the changes of the 2008 flood map to the proposed 2024 map.

Minutes 11/27- **Selectman Strand motioned to approve the minutes from 11/27/2023. Selectman Hibberd seconded and all were in favor.**

Ammonoosuc LAC – Nominate Andrea Bryant- **Selectman Strand nominated Andrea Bryant to represent Bethlehem Ammonoosuc LAC committee. Selectman Hibberd seconded and all were in favor.**

Auction Update Nancy Strand- Selectman Strand updated the board that the auction had closed, and the town made $504.

Liaison/Committee Update- Selectman Strand updated the board that Transfer Station Committee would be resubmitting for the USDA grant for the same amount. Selectman Strand continued they would also be submitting for the Mascoma grant in the amount of $40,000 which matches the requested amount for the 2024 capital reserve warrant.

**Chairman Morris motioned to resubmit the Transfer Station USDA grant submission. Selectman Hibberd seconded and all were in favor.**

Chairman Morris updated the board that the Conservation Commission would be hiring a consultant to take natural resources inventory and it should be done every 10 years in conjunction with the master plan. The money to fund the consultant would be coming form Conservation Commission’s savings account.

**Chairman Morris motioned to approve the agreement with Watershed Wildlife on behalf of the Conservation Commission to be aid from the Conservation Commission savings. Selectman Hibberd seconded and all were in favor.**

Selectman Bruno updated the board that the Planning Board held a public meeting regarding the proposed ordinance changes because of the NHHOP grant. The first public hearing will be held on December 13th and short-term rentals will be discussed.

**Other Chairman Morris motioned to approve the request from the Needy Child fund. Selectman Strand seconded and all were in favor.**

Non-public Session per RSA 91A-3 II (personnel, reputation, and legal) Chairman Morris made a motion to go into non-public for reasons of personnel. Selectman Strand seconded and roll call followed.

The board discussed personnel.

Chairman Morris made a motion to adjourn at 8:00. Selectman Strand seconded, and all were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Moritz

Town Administrator